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Maine Forest Service-Forest
Protection Division
[Http://www.maine.gov](http://www.maine.gov)

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The Fireline

VFA/FEPP/CAP Update by Bill Getchell

In the fall of 2006, the Maine Forest Service received VFA grant requests from 107 towns. Out of those 107 towns, 104 were approved for their projects and other purchases totaling \$149,406.66! Before the grant awards checks can be mailed to towns, the Maine Forest Service must receive proof of payment via a cancelled check or a town warrant by 10/1/07. As of 6/5/07 only 8 towns have completed their projects or made their purchases and returned proof of such! The timetable has been speeded up for 2008. Applications will be sent out in September and the awards will be warranted in January of 2008.

Screening of FEPP continues but we have not acquired much property during the summer as most of the equipment that is available needs costly repairs. Every other year, we are required by the program to do a physical inventory of all Federal Excess Property including those pieces that are on loan to towns. The Maine Forest Service must verify that cooperators are abiding by the terms of the agreement which includes housing vehicles, affixing cooperative decals, keeping vehicles serviced, and registering and insuring rolling stock. We also check vehicle mileages and ensure that serial #'s and other federal stickers and tags are in place. Federal program administrators have not yet insisted, but they did remark that they would prefer to see vehicles painted instead of leaving them camo green. This may be an issue in the future. Also, while Maine law does not require municipalities to register emergency vehicles, the FEPP program and agreement does require it so please make sure that these are registered and have plates on them.

We have picked up (3) 5/4 T pickups, (1) 5 T 6x6 under the new Fire Fighter Program. These trucks will be used for in house and not for loan.

Photo Right-One of the nicest looking federal excess vehicles that you'll ever see is this 5 ton 6x6 that the Calais FD has renovated and uses as a water tender. **Chief Dan Carlow** says that this truck is "slow but dependable" and has been a nice addition to their Department.



Wildland Urban Interface by Alan Hammond

When most people think of Wildfire, they envision western states where a wildfire can destroy hundreds of homes and thousands of acres of land. Yet every state and every community are at risk as more and more homes are built in the “*wildland urban interface*.” Wildland urban interface simply refers to houses that are built close to or within forested areas which in Maine is quite common. The Forest Protection Division of the Maine Forest Service, is working hard to assist communities reduce their risk through education, risk assessment, and hazard mitigation.

Beginning in 2004 the Forest Service implemented a “Wildland Urban Interface Committee” comprised of a District Ranger, A Ranger Pilot, 2 Forest Rangers, a GIS expert, a computer database expert and the planning and training coordinator. This committee, chaired by District Ranger Bill Hamilton, is engaged in a number of projects with the assistance Forest Rangers across the state.

Development of “WHAMS”: (Wildland Hazard Assessment Methodology) program. This Program will provide statewide consistency in community risk assessment. When completed this summer or early fall, the WHAMS program, along with instructions for use, will be made available on CD to all town wardens and fire chiefs in Maine.

Public Education: Fire Prevention Specialist Kent Nelson continues to work with the committee to develop public educational materials. Some of the educational materials include a Firewise brochure, radio and television public service announcements, and a 15-20 minute Educational DVD to be released this fall.

The Firewise brochure will be distributed to all town wardens to handout when issuing an open burning permit.

Training: Beginning in 2005, the “*Fires in the Wildland Urban Interface*” unit was incorporated into the Maine Wildfire Training Academy. This four day class assists structure and wildland firefighters in interface awareness, size-up and strategies for attacking wildland fire, structure protection tactics, and firefighter safety in the interface.

Community Risk Assessments: When requested, the Forest Protection Division will work with residents to conduct a risk assessment for that community. The assessment is followed up with a comprehensive report detailing findings with specific recommendations for mitigating risks. There are 54 assessments on-going in various stages of completion.

Hazardous Fuels Reduction: The Forest Protection Division will assist communities in identifying ways to reduce hazardous fuels through either prescribed burning or mechanical means.

Island Project: The Forest Service is working with 15 mainland islands inhabited year round to assess their risk of wildfire, community planning and fuel reduction efforts. Islands face unique challenges of limited resources and personnel for fire fighting increasing risk.

Current Status of the On Line Burn Permit System by Kent Nelson – Fire Prevention Specialist



The on-line burn permit system was put in place as a “pilot” system on July 1, 2005, and currently only covers **organized towns in the Maine Forest Service’s Southern Region** (roughly south of Newport and west of Bucksport) and all **unorganized** townships through out the state.

The Maine Forest Service is pleased with the safety and performance of the on line burn permit system. Currently, over 7800 permits have been purchased via the system. The Maine Forest Service has recommended to the current Legislature that the system be expanded statewide. We have received hundreds of requests from outside the test area from citizens interested in obtaining burn permits electronically. We have also recommended that hand written burn permits still be available statewide without charge. However, the current Legislature does not allow for expansion of the system statewide, so new legislation will be proposed in early 2008. This means that the earliest the system *could* be expanded (if approved) would be July or August 2008. For more information, see www.maineburnpermit.com.

Fire News and Mobilizations- Fire stats for the first part of 2007 are down from previous years; to date statewide, we have had only 321 fires for a total of 339 acres. The largest fire was 22.5 acres in Great Pond. When the fire danger dips to “Low” we can focus on events occurring regionally and nationally. A major part of training for our Ranger force comes from mobilization assignments to fires and “all risk” incidents in other parts of the US and Canada. In 2007, we have been able to mobilize three-21 person crews to Quebec wildfires in May and June. Consisting of civilian firefighters supervised by a handful of Forest Rangers, these trips are an excellent opportunity for our newest Rangers to gain first hand experience on a major wildfire. One of the crews worked on a fire there this year which was nearly 150,000 acres!

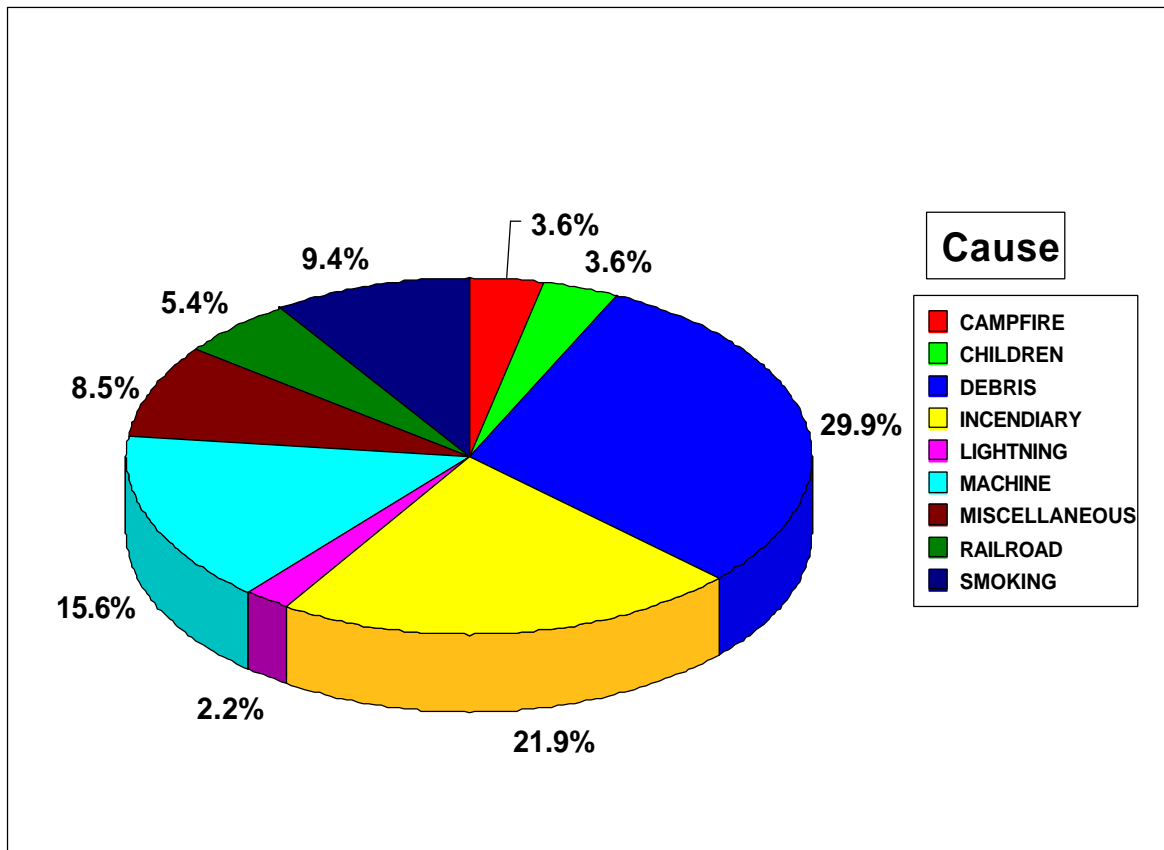
Nationally, we have sent Rangers as single resources to the southeast (see story on page 5) and, more recently, to the western states. As of July 24th, the following Rangers are currently assigned to wildfires: **Jeff Currier**-Task Force Leader/Helibase and **Doug Huettnner**-Strike Team Leader Crew to the 8327 acre Elk Complex in Happy Camp, CA; **Matt Gomes**-Strike Team Leader Crew to the 137,000 Egley Complex in Oregon; **Jasmine Redlevske**-Equipment and Personnel Time Recorder to the 73,000 acre Black Pine 2 Fire in the Sawtooth NF in southern ID; **Robby Gross**-Engine Boss on a fire severity detail in the Kaibab NF in AZ; and **John Leavitt**-Task Force Leader to the 16,498 acre Tunk Grade Fire in WA. **Sprague Wise**-Crew Boss with **Justin Carney**-Crew Boss Trainee were assigned to a Hispanic/American crew which was on standby in California doing project work for several days until yesterday when they were assigned to a 2495 acre fire on the Humboldt/Toiyabe NF. The fire is currently 0% contained and exhibiting significant fire activity in brush and grass threatening both homes and powerlines. Finally, **George Harris** just returned home from the Rogue Forest in Prospect, OR. **George** was mobilized as an Equipment Manager but was later assigned as a Type 4 IC chasing lightning strikes with a crew and an engine! We anticipate more single resource mobilizations this summer, possibly a crew, as well as the Maine Incident Management Team being posted. National fire information is updated daily on the internet at <http://inciweb.org/>.



Statewide Fire Stats for 2006 Fire Season

compiled by Mary Casey, Dispatcher-Ashland Headquarters

2006 Cause	Maine Forest Service, Forest Fires							
	Central Region		Southern Region		Northern Region		Total	Total
	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres
CAMPFIRE	8	1.40	4	1.30	4	22.90	16	25.60
CHILDREN	8	1.80	25	44.50	3	1.20	36	47.50
DEBRIS	67	893.75	96	170.31	16	63.35	179	1,127.41
INCENDIARY	49	182.95	23	19.44	21	54.45	93	256.84
LIGHTNING	5	1.90			7	0.62	12	2.52
MACHINE	35	17.01	48	55.86	19	36.62	102	109.49
MISCELLANEOUS	19	14.91	66	95.48	7	3.57	92	113.96
RAILROAD	12	34.45	20	17.66	13	2.40	45	54.51
SMOKING	21	15.65	22	14.16	1	4.00	44	33.81
Total	224	1,163.82	304	418.71	91	189.11	619	1,771.64



Maine's Forest Rangers Lend a Hand in Georgia's Worst Fire Season on Record.

To date, five Forest Rangers and one Maine Forest Service employee have traveled to Georgia to serve in various fireline and fire management positions. Assignments started in early April and have been ongoing since that time. Rangers have been assigned to the Sweat Farm, Big Turnaround, and several other fires, which have scorched over 500,000 acres to date. The magnitude and intensity of these fires is unprecedented for the area and far exceed any historical fires of record.

Starting in April, Rangers **Jeremiah Crockett** and **Joseph Mints** completed assignments as a Division Supervisor and Field Observer, respectively. Both were assigned to fires which burned on private, state and federal land in several counties of Georgia and into Florida. The fires destroyed 26 structures and displaced many families for extended periods of time due to the ongoing fire threat. Both **Crockett** and **Mints** reported extended periods of extreme fire behavior and significant involvement in planned and reactionary firing operations. By the time both returned to Maine in mid-May the three fires that they were on had burned together into one, large fire which was 300,000 acres at that time.



Rangers **Matt Gomes** and **John Leavitt** were assigned to the Southeastern Area Coordination Center (SACC) in Atlanta in May and June.

While there, both Rangers served as one of two Southeastern Area Compact Coordinators where they were the point of contact between the 10 Southeastern Fire Compact States and the SACC. **Gomes** and **Leavitt** coordinated the resource requests from the field to the Compact States and channeled filled orders through the various dispatch centers and the SACC. Ranger **Leavitt** traveled to Atlanta and replaced **Gomes** at the SACC office to continue the assistance to the Southeastern Compact States in coordinating resource needs and tracking. On his second assignment to Georgia, Ranger **Joseph Mints** replaced **Leavitt** in late June at SACC in Atlanta. **Mints** continued the compact coordination tasks for the over 1300 compact resources committed to date, along with tracking the demobilization of resources as the number of large incidents continue to wind down in the southeast. Additionally he has been working to help the SACC office determine each of the Compact States' current ability to handle the many initial attack fires occurring and to determine the States ability to assist others in the Compact and nationally. With the current 100 year record drought in most areas of the South and the traditional fire activity surrounding the 4th of July, **Mints** remained at SACC in Atlanta until after the Holiday.

Ranger **Ritchie Hafford** departed for Georgia in early June. **Hafford** served as a Division/Group Supervisor with the Northeast Compact IMT, which operated under the Georgia Forestry Commission. **Hafford's** group of state and local firefighters worked on the Sweat Farm and Bugaboo Shrub #2 Fires in addition to staffing several other smaller fires after containment. **Hafford** and his firefighting group faced the many challenges of multi-agency and multi-jurisdiction incidents along with long distances and hours of daily travel between fires.



A sixth employee, **Peter Beringer**, who works in administration for the Maine Forest Service in Augusta, was assigned to Georgia as a Finance Section Chief. **Peter** worked with the Georgia Forestry Commission, incident management teams, contracting officers, incident business managers, and buying teams to begin payment to the myriad of resources assigned to incidents around the state.

Note: As of July 1, 2007, the State of Georgia has had 5932 wild-fires with acreage totaling nearly 515,000 acres. The Big Turn-around Complex is the only active, major fire. It is 386,722 acres and 90% contained.

Forest Ranger Joe Mints—Georgia



5TH ANNUAL MAINE STATE WILDFIRE TRAINING

ACADEMY was held June 2 & 3 and June 9 & 10 at Thomas College in Waterville and was once again a big success. We had 172 registrants and offered the following courses:

- S130/190
- S215
- S211
- S131
- S200,
- S231
- Annual Refresher
- The run/pack carry was held on Saturday June 9th with over 60 participants.



Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of this year's academy. We hope to be as successful next year.



Photo Left: The Maine Forest Service has a diverse fire prevention program including roadside and other signs, Smokey Bear presentations, parade attendance, and classroom talks to name a few. We also provide booths for the Fryeburg Fair and Sportsman Shows. Pictured at the left is Ranger **Andrew Gacek** at the Loggers Expo in Bangor with the Central Region's new booth. Rangers handed out prevention materials as well as information on wood harvesting and transportation laws at this event which is held in Bangor every other year.

Who's Who?

You may have seen some new faces in the Forest Service Department and Aircraft Division. Please welcome our new Forest Rangers and Pilot.

Southern Region: Ranger **Lisa Byers**—Norridgewock

Central Region: Ranger **Aliesha Rautenberg**—Old Town; Ranger **Josh Noyes**—Topsfield; Laborer **Brian McLaughlin**—Lee; Ranger Pilot **Lincoln Mazzei**—Old Town; Ranger **Samuel Heffner**—Greenville

Northern Region: Ranger **William Barnum**—Hay Lake

State Staff: We also welcome **Alan Hammond** to the Maine Forest Service as our new Planning and Training Coordinator. Alan has worked for years on the staff of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy in Waterville and Vassalboro. He replaces Leslie Wiles who recently retired.



Spring-Summer 2007 Report from Aircraft Operations-

by John Knight, Chief Pilot and the Aircraft Crew:

Here is a picture of our first airplane in 1927 and an artist's rendition of our soon to be new Bell 407. The helicopter will come from the factory in early September and our maintenance crew will do extensive finishing work to prepare it to go into service for the spring 2008 fire season. The 407 will lift the same 240 gallon bucket as the Huey while burning half the fuel. We expect this helicopter to be an affordable and reliable replacement for the aging Huey.

Air Service in Maine Forestry



The Waco Biplane rented for the season by the Maine Forestry Department

(Left) The Waco Biplane rented for the season by the Maine Forestry Department in 1927.

(Right and Below)

Artists rendition of our soon to be new Bell 407, the interior will look as below.

